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SUBJECT: LITHUANIA'S JUSTICE MINISTER PLEDGES CONTINUITY
AND COOPERATION WITH USG

REF: A. VILNIUS 57

[B](#). 2004 VILNIUS 1548

[C](#). 2004 VILNIUS 1546

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Justice Minister Gintautas Buzinskas, meeting with Ambassador Mull on January 14, pledged continuity in his Ministry and U.S.-Lithuanian cooperation on legal issues. Both sides agreed on the need for additional efforts on anti-corruption and counter-terrorism. The Ambassador expressed a desire to fine-tune the bilateral Extradition Treaty to bring it in line with U.S.-EU legislation. Ambassador Mull praised the Ministry for its constructive efforts on Jewish communal property restitution and offered his assistance in progressing further. Buzinskas emphasized that the GOL would not change its policy vis-a-vis restitution and that the Ministry would continue its work on schedule. Buzinskas' reassurance is a positive signal that the GOL remains committed to restituting Jewish property and will not unnecessarily delay the process. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Ambassador Mull met with Gintautas Buzinskas, recently confirmed Justice Minister, January 14 as part of his tour of Lithuania's new Cabinet (refs A, B, and C). Buzinskas pledged continuity in the Ministry's functioning, noting that as "only one man at the top" he did not intend to overhaul the institution. He showed trust in his subordinates, often yielding the floor to his ViceMinister and State Secretary during the meeting, and said that the Ministry's "strategic direction" remains the same.

Buzinskas: "Coalition is Stable"

[1](#)3. (SBU) The Ambassador asked Buzinskas, one of the Labor Party's five Cabinet ministers, for his insights on the functioning of the ruling coalition. Buzinskas stressed that there were no major conflicts within the coalition, especially on legal issues. The government's policy of continuity, he said, demonstrated its maturity and the stability of the coalition.

Continuing Cooperation: Visits and Projects

[1](#)4. (U) The Ambassador emphasized the value of sending Justice Ministry officials to the United States for training, highlighting the recent trip of ViceMinister Gintaras Svedas, who spoke highly of his experience in America. He encouraged Buzinskas to consider a similar visit to the United States in the coming months. Ambassador Mull noted that our priority with the Ministry for 2005 would be on assisting with anti-corruption measures. The Ambassador also urged a continuation of Embassy-sponsored seminars on topics such as IPR, ethics, trafficking in persons, and cyber-crime. Buzinskas replied that he perceived cooperation in combating corruption and terrorism, "difficult problems that require continual attention," as most fruitful.

Extradition Treaty

[1](#)5. (U) Ambassador Mull praised our bilateral Extradition Treaty as exemplary and solidly in place, although he expressed an intention to fine-tune the treaty in the coming months to ensure it is compatible with U.S.-EU agreements. ViceMinister Svedas agreed, noting that other bilateral agreements might also require some small adjustments due to Lithuania's accession to the EU.

Jewish Property Restitution

[1](#)6. (SBU) Ambassador next raised the restitution of former Jewish communal property seized during the Holocaust. He praised the Ministry for its positive role in making progress towards a final list of properties, and urged a speedy

resolution to the restitution issue. He offered to assist the Ministry in its interactions with the international Jewish Community and noted that Rabbi Andrew Baker, AJC Director for International Jewish Affairs, would be traveling to Vilnius later in January to present the latest version of the property list.

17. (SBU) Buzinskas replied that the new administration would not alter Lithuania's position on this issue, and that the Justice Ministry would continue its work on the property list and draft amendment to the Law on Restitution. Buzinskas also noted that for three years he worked with a German fund on compensation to Holocaust victims, gaining valuable experience in dealing with the international Jewish community and restitution issues.

Comment: No Hiccups for Restitution

18. (SBU) Fall Parliamentary elections, and the advent of a new government, created some uncertainty regarding the restitution of former Jewish communal property. Viktor Uspaskich and his Labor Party, the largest faction in the new Parliament, have declined to take a strong stance on the issue. Labor Party stalwart Buzinskas has now made clear to us, however, that under his leadership the Ministry of Justice will not change course in its work on restitution. Although ultimately restitution will depend on a political decision taken in Parliament, we can at least be confident that administrative delays will not hold the process back. We fully expect the Ministry of Justice to continue its professional handling of the restitution issue.

MULL